7: Baldus E-5 (1935) 1940 SP22 Tapirapé SP22

000 The Concept of Time among the Brazilian Indians
[O conceito do tempo entre os índios do Brasil]

Herbert Baldus

Revista do Arquivo Municipal
Vol. 71, pp. 87-93
São Paulo, 1940

Translated from the Portuguese by Ariane Brunel

Human Relations Area Files

1960

[Title page]

[Ed., pp. 87-88 are not translated.]

000 [89] In Mühlmann (p. 344) we read: "In Polynesia, the new year was reckoned from the beginning of the fishing season, and since this period of time coincided with the appearance of the Pleiades above the horizon, a fruitful half-year, mata-li'i-i-nia, that is, 'Pleiades above,' was distinguished from an unfruitful or less fruitful half-year, mata-li'i-i-raro, that is, 'Pleiades below.' A Pleiadic year was also known in India."

2 It is also worth mentioning Métraux's observation (p. 51) that the Pleiades seem to have been the object of special beliefs among the Tupinambá, who were convinced, according to an unpublished manuscript by Thevet, that they fostered the growth of manioc, the staple of their diet. One of the most beautiful legends of the Taulipáng, a Karaíb [Carib] tribe of the Roroima, relates how the Pleiades came to the sky and also mentions their function as heralds of the rainy season that brings an abundance of food with the appearance of shoals of fish moving upstream to spawn (Koch-Grünberg, p. 13).

805 Among the Tapirapé, I did not find anything corresponding to this Indian and Polynesian culture trait [Tr., the Tapirapé do lend importance to the Pleiades]. It is true that of all the events in the yearly cycle, the rainy season is of greatest interest to these Indians. They did not tell me anything about the Pleiades, however. The rainy season is to them the opposite of what it is to the Taulipáng, namely, not the time of well-being, but, in the words of the Tapirapé, the time of evil shadows, of baleful spirits. It is characteristic of the timid nature of these Tupí Indians that they lend greatest importance to the time of greatest distress, instead of centering their thoughts on the dry season, which is to them the pleasant time of abundant vegetable and animal foods and thus the time of health and pleasure in being alive. [Ed., the last two paragraphs on p. 89 and the first paragraph, as well as the first three sentences of the second paragraph, on p. 90 are omitted.]

[181] [221] [132]

[90] The Tapirapé could not tell me the number of days in the lunar month, although they were familiar with the moon cycle and called the new moon txãhi apát, "moon sleeps," or txahi akantxím, "moon finished," and the full moon ãuvahó, ho being the augmentative suffix, and ãuva corresponding probably to the ãu, "lunar," listed by Montoya, and the yacy icáua, "full, fat moon," given by Stradelli. The first quarter, when the visible part is not yet very thick, is called

821 192

821 emekuantxíampaní, a word that refers to the thin, long tembetá
172 [Tr., lip plug] of the boys. To other stages of [91] visibility they gave the names itaxavãhaũpíri, eviyik, and akaemerút, three terms whose meaning I was unable to determine and which must therefore be disregarded until further elucidated.

805 It became apparent that the Tapirapé are not in the habit of
192 reckoning time in terms of lunar months when I attempted to find out the duration they attribute to the span of time corresponding roughly to our year. They distinguished the following three periods: amína, "rain," the rainy season; amína akípaák, the end of the rainy season; and amína apám, "rain sleeps," the dry season. They attributed, still with some certainty, about five txãhi akantxím, "moon finished," to the first period, while their computations for the second period varied from one to five, and those for the "sleep of the rain" from three to eight. [Ed., two paragraphs are omitted.]

[171] Although they are not unfamiliar with the continuous alternation of day and night, the Brazilian Indians, to my knowledge, do not have words covering those two phases as a unit. The Tapirapé word ána merely designates the day from sunrise to sundown in contrast to the darkness of the night, and corresponds to ára in the above-cited Tupí dictionaries. For "night" the Tapirapé have the terms kanók (or kanúk), ípitún (or ípitúnã), and txãhi eni (or txãhi ãni), the first one designating nightfall or early evening, the second a dark, moon less [92] night, and the third a moonlit night or moonlight. [Ed., the remainder of the paragraph and the first sentence of the subsequent paragraph are omitted.]

It is not surprising that the concept of "midnight" is lacking among clockless people like the Tapirapé [Ed., the remainder of
114 the sentence is omitted]. The Vocabulário na Língua Brasílica
192 [Vocabulary of the Aboriginal Brazilian Language] lists the word
805 pigcarê with the translation, "the whole night, or throughout the night." I did not hear any similar term in Tapirapé, not even a word similar to píhá, another term for "night" listed by Montoya.

The Tapirapé word kaém, "daybreak," corresponds to coé in Montoya, coéma in the "Dicionário Brasiliano [Aboriginal Brazilian Dictionary]," coamutu in the Vocabulário na Lingua Brasílica, and coéma in Stradelli.

For "midday" the Tapirapé said atxavũapít. Montoya lists açayê, and the Vocabulário na Língua Brasílica, açajê. In Stradelli, the word "middle" is pytera.

192 According to my Tapirapé informants, "today" is ĭn, "tomorrow"
805 is ãntxeivé, "yesterday" is designated by the number antxepé, "one," and "day before yesterday" by mõkóimi, "two." [Ed., the remainder of the paragraph is omitted.]

Among the Tapirapé, the exact and numerical reference to a past event seldom goes farther back than mõkóimi, "day before yester-
[802] day," since as a rule they do not count to mãpit, "three," preferring to say vuaitépe, "much "(in quantity), or mõ (or mũ), "far away" (a word that designates great distance, in space as well as [93] time, and that is perhaps related to mombĭrĭ, "far away," in Montoya). Concerning the future, on the other hand, they frequently say ãntxeivé, "tomorrow," although they may be referring to a time later than the following day.

805 Since not only the computations of time but its direct denominations as well are invariably abstract, however, it is more convenient to the Tapirapé mentality to use mostly indirect designations by grounding the references to past and future times in concrete phenomena.
[821] Thus, they indicate the time of day by extending their hand in the direction of the place where the sun was or will be at the time in ques-
[171] tion. By what I saw, and also by what Krause (p. 339) mentions, the Karajá [Caraja] proceed in the same fashion.

If certain events took place several weeks or months earlier, the
[824] Tapirapé pinpoint them chronologically by showing with the hand the degree of development of certain plants at the times in question, for example, the height of maize or sugar cane. If several years
[856] have gone by, the Tapirapé narrator extends his hand to the height that a certain person had reached at that time. This person is usually the narrator himself, if his age enables him to do so. If he is about 50 years old and thus stopped growing dozens of years ago, but wishes to indicate an event that occurred five years earlier, he will use a child five years old or older.

805 It should be mentioned, finally, that the words kaém, "daybreak,"
823 and kanúk, "nightfall," are also used for purposes of orientation in
[192] geographical space, the former meaning "east" and the latter "west." Judging by the explanations given to me by the Tapirapé, the concepts of "north" and "south" are lacking among them.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

[only of those authors and titles mentioned above]

113

"Diccionario Portuguez-Brasiliano e Brasiliano Portuguez" [Portuguese -- Aboriginal Brazilian and Aboriginal Brazilian--Portuguese Dictionary], complete reprinting of the 1795 edition, followed by a second, hitherto unpublished part, edited and prefaced by Plínio Ayrosa. Revista do Museu Paulista, Vol. 18, São Paulo, 1934.

Theodor Koch-Gruenberg, Vom Roroima zum Orinoco [From the Roroima to the Orinoco], Vol. 2, Myths and Legends of the Taulipáng and Arekuná Indians, Stuttgart, 1924.

Fritz Krause, In den Wildnissen Brasiliens [In the Wilds of Brazil], Leipzig, 1911.

A. Métraux, La religion des Tupinamba et ses rapports avec celle des autres tribus Tupi-Guarani [The Religion of the Tupinamba and its Relation to That of the Other Tupi-Guarani Tribes], Paris, 1928.

Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, Vocabulario y Tesoro de la lengua Guarani, ó mas bien Tupi [Vocabulary and Thesaurus of the Guarani, or Tupi, Language], new edition, Vienna, Paris, 1876.

Wilhelm Muehlmann, Rassen- und Voelkerkunde [The Science of Races and Peoples], Braunschweig, 1936.

Ermano Stradelli, "Vocabulário da língua geral português-nheêngatú e nheêngatú-português" [Vocabulary of the língua-geral, Portuguese]. Revista do Instituto Histório e Geográfico Brasileiro, tome 104, vol. 158, Rio de Janeiro, 1929.

André Thevet, Les Singularitez de la France Antarticque [The Singularities of Antarctic France], Paris, 1878.

7: Baldus--5 E-5 (1935) 1940 SP22 Tapirapé SP22

113 Vocabulário na Língua Brasílica; manuscrito português-Tupí do século XVII [Words in the Aboriginal Brazilian Language; a Portuguese-Tupi manuscript of the 17th century], edited by Plínio Ayrosa. Volume 20 in the collection of the Departamento de Cultura, São Paulo, 1938.